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## Reauthorization: Institute for Museum Services (IMS) (1990): Speech 06

Willard L. Boyd

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Willard L. Boyd  
Chairman  
National Museum Services Board  
Institute of Museum Services

Statement before the Senate Subcommittee  
on Education, Arts, and Humanities

Washington, DC  
March 23, 1990

STATEMENT BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION, ARTS AND HUMANITIES

by Willard L. Boyd

Chairman, National Museum Services Board  
President, Field Museum of Natural History,  
Chicago, Illinois

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Willard Boyd, and I am President of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. I also have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the National Museum Services Board, the policy board for the Institute of Museum Services.

I greatly appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of the reauthorization of the Institute of Museum Services. All of us in the museum world applaud the members of this subcommittee and the co-sponsors of this legislation for your support of our nation's museums through the Institute of Museum Services and its programs.

Museums are major centers of life-long learning in the United States. They provide education in the sciences, humanities and the arts. Through museums and their collections, persons of all ages, all backgrounds, and all financial means have the opportunity to learn on their own about our country's culture, history, and physical environment. Museums are available to every member of the family, together or separately, to pursue their leisure time in a productive manner.

Today there is much concern in this country about how we spend our time. We have trouble spending our non-work time in productive and satisfying ways. Some of us threaten others because we are addicted to alcohol and drugs or engaged in group violence. We are increasingly hostile to each other. We avoid people who are different. We are frightened by pluralism.

Our nation's museums currently serve millions of Americans who are seeking to educate themselves and to find meaning in their lives. Museums are places for continuing education, public debate and community development. Museums help us to understand our diversity as well as our interdependence. They address issues of ethics and ecology, conflicts and conflict resolution, pluralism in America and all of the other vital concerns we face individually and together as citizens.

Museums are located everywhere in this country - in every state, in every size of community. Most American museums are private institutions which are financed by private donations and local government taxes. Museums charge no or low admission prices in order to provide access to all people seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year.

The Institute of Museum Services is a small agency working effectively in a large field. In its twelve years, the Agency has helped museums accomplish much programmatically. IMS is a model of efficiency in making grants with an exceedingly small staff. Moreover, IMS reviews

annually a comprehensive statistical profile of how its funds have been applied.

The essence of the Institute of Museum Services programs is general operational support for museums which merit support. The IMS budget allows funding for less than one-third of the museums which request general operating support. While it is our objective to grant awards that support approximately 10% of a museum's operating budget, our funds allow us to do this only for museums with an operating budget of \$750,000 and below. Museums with a higher operating budget are limited to grants of \$75,000 a year.

It is important to emphasize that general operating support grants are made annually on a competitive basis. General Operating Support grants are awarded on the basis of an evaluation of all activities of the museum, not just a specific program or project.

General operating support is vital to museums. Museum buildings are open most days of the year. Their physical plants are expensive to heat, cool, light, clean and secure. Such basic costs do not appeal to many private donors, especially corporations and foundations which by charter must focus on particular projects which carry out their missions.

The General Operating Support program of the Institute of Museum Services has made a big difference for all of the

museums which have received this support in the last twelve years. Now, more than ever, that program can play an even more vital role in the strengthening of museums throughout the country.

Applications are sorted into six funding categories based on the budget size of museums: this guarantees access to GOS by small and emerging museums, museums of diverse cultural traditions, and museums located in sparsely settled places. All are eligible to receive funding under the GOS. Ultimately, funding for small and emerging museums, as well as for those with larger budgets, is based on the merits of its overall operation.

In a recent hearing held by the Subcommittee On Government Activities and Transportation of the Committee on Government Operations, museums in the Chicago area were asked by Representative Cardiss Collins about the accessibility of federal grants for small museums and for museums of different cultural traditions. Both Ms. Helen Valdez, director of the Mexican Museum of Fine Arts in Chicago and I spoke specifically to the fact that the federal operating support grant of IMS assures access based on merit.

Furthermore, the four Museum Assessment Programs funded by the Institute of Museum Services are specifically designed to

assist emerging museums. Mrs. Murray has already mentioned these assessment programs and their focus on overall museum operations, collections care, public services and conservation.

In conclusion, I want to comment about the museum field's concerns about how the Institute of Museum Services functions. To prepare for reauthorization, Mrs. Murray's predecessor, Mrs. Lois Burke Shepard, convened an ad hoc group of museum professionals chaired by former NMSB Chairman, Douglas Dillon, to consider these issues. Prior to the meeting of that ad hoc group, the museum field was asked to submit written comments which were then reviewed by the ad hoc group along with their own comments. The recommendations of the ad hoc committee were subsequently reviewed by the National Museum Services Board. As a result of these comments on reauthorization, the Museum Services Board undertook an eight-month administrative self-study of the General Operating Support Program and an assessment of how the Institute of Museum Services can communicate more effectively with the field.

The recommendations of that self-study are being implemented by our new director, Daphne Murray. Also, in preparation for reauthorization, she has been actively meeting with museum groups around the country and taking the pulse as to how the field believes we can improve the administrative processes of the Agency. Her long museum experience, coupled with her openness, accessibility and enthusiasm, ensure an even more

significant role for IMS in working to help American museums move forward.

I want again to express our appreciation to this committee and to urge reauthorization for five years the Institute of Museum Services, an agency which is committed to advancing America's diverse museums for the day-to-day benefit of our diverse citizenry.